

Those who do not feel compelled to push against these voter suppression need a lesson in history. Thankfully, a July 27 column in the Washington Post by Norman Lear offers just that insight. Penned on the occasion of his 99th birthday, this decorated American war hero, one of our Nation's Greatest Generation, recalls the pain and betrayal felt by African-American war heroes who fought for democracy abroad, only to be excluded from it at home. He reminds us that it took decades of relentless activism to give millions of minority American voters and others a real voice by finally giving them a vote.

And most importantly, he urges all Americans to fight now to protect the right to vote, the very right that gives democracy its name. This is a call to action. Voting suppression cannot stand. From the For the People Act to my own bipartisan John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act, named for another icon of the voting movement, this Senate has a real opportunity to stand for democracy. I will work in good faith with any member of the Senate, regardless of party, to find a path to passing and enacting that important bill bearing John Lewis's name. Efforts to restore the Voting Rights Act have always been bipartisan. There is no reason it shouldn't be bipartisan again now.

To echo Norman's words, the right to vote isn't about party or even politics. It is about our system of self-government and the notion that a government of, by, and for the people is worth protecting in a world where authoritarianism and tyranny are still forces we are reckoning with. I ask unanimous consent that Norman Lear's opinion piece, titled "Norman Lear: As I begin my 100th year, I'm baffled that voting rights are still under attack," be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

[From the Washington Post, July 27, 2021]

AS I BEGIN MY 100TH YEAR, I'M BAFFLED THAT VOTING RIGHTS ARE STILL UNDER ATTACK

(By Norman Lear)

I woke up today at the start of my 100th year as a citizen of this beautiful, bewildering country. I am proud of the progress we've made in my first 99 years, and it breaks my heart to see it undermined by politicians more committed to their own power than the principles that should bind us together. Frankly, I am baffled and disturbed that 21st-century Americans must still struggle to protect their right to vote.

I am a patriot, and I will not surrender that word to those who play to our worst impulses rather than our highest ideals. When the United States entered World War II, I dropped out of college to fight fascism. I flew 52 missions with a crew in a B-17, dropping bombs 35 times. Unlike so many others, I returned from that war safely, to another 70-plus years of life, love, family, failure and triumph.

It's very likely that I owe my ass and all those decades of human experience to that Black and Brown squadron of Red Tail P-51

fighter pilots known as the Tuskegee airmen. When we saw their red tails coming to escort us, we all felt a bit safer.

Yet when these courageous men returned to the United States, they returned to racism, segregation and discrimination. Their heroism did not shield them from the indignities and violence of Jim Crow. I can only imagine the depth of the betrayal the airmen must have felt, but it did not prevent many of them from accomplishing great things.

I think often of the congresswoman Barbara Jordan. She will always be remembered for declaring during President Richard M. Nixon's impeachment hearings, "My faith in the Constitution is whole; it is complete; it is total." Even now, it gives me chills to think of her saying that, as a Black woman, in the face of her own experiences of prejudice and her full knowledge of our history.

I believe Jordan's faith in the Constitution, like my continued faith in our country, was grounded in the faith, love and hope of all the people who have struggled for the past 230 years—including millions who rallied for racial justice this past year—to make the Constitution's promises real for all of us.

After we defeated fascism overseas, it took 20 more years to pass the Voting Rights Act and Civil Rights Act at home. Now, headlines seem drawn from the past: States target Black voters with voter-suppression bills. Federal voting-rights laws blocked in the Senate by a filibuster. Racial and religious nationalism, nativism and authoritarianism are seemingly on the rise everywhere. It is deeply discouraging to this member of what has been called "the Greatest Generation."

But do you know who else was part of the Greatest Generation? Rosa Parks, Fannie Lou Hamer and Thurgood Marshall. And think of the greatness demonstrated by generations that followed us: Jordan, the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. and John Lewis, and millions of not-famous people who risked everything to claim the right to vote.

To legislators getting between people and the ballot box, and to senators who are standing in the dishonorable tradition of those who filibustered civil rights legislation, I say this: You may pass some unjust laws. You may win elections by preventing or discouraging people from voting.

But you will not in the end defeat the democratic spirit, the spirit that animated the Tuskegee airmen to whom I owe my life, the spirit that powers millions of Americans who give of themselves to defend voting rights, protect our environment, preserve peaceful pluralism, defeat discrimination, and expand educational and economic opportunity.

The right to vote is foundational to addressing all these issues. It is at the heart of everything I have fought for in war and in peacetime.

To senators who are willing to sacrifice the right to vote to some outdated notion of bipartisanship and Senate tradition, I almost do not know what to say. On the scale of justice, this is not even a close call. Do what's right.

Protecting voting rights should not be today's struggle. But it is. And that means it is our struggle, yours and mine, for as long as we have breath and strength.

#### SOUTH SUDAN

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, after decades of civil war, famine, and political instability, after millions were killed and millions more became refugees, many hoped that independence and a

peace agreement in South Sudan would usher in a period of stability and progress.

Some South Sudanese refugees who had resettled in the United States returned to South Sudan to aid in rebuilding. Unfortunately, peace was fleeting and the past decade of independence has been marred by continued violent ethnic conflict, widespread hunger, and ongoing disputes between rival politicians that have cared more about their own ambitions than the South Sudanese people. Despite several power sharing agreements, promises of unity and reconciliation, and a goal to seat a full Parliament in 2020, the rivalry between President Salva Kiir and Vice President Riek Machar has stoked tensions between the Dinka and Nuer ethnic groups and neglected public infrastructure and basic services. On August 2, almost a year past the promised deadline, an incomplete Parliament was sworn into office, with 62 members absent due to disagreements over the power-sharing arrangement.

The people of South Sudan cannot wait another decade for progress. They cannot wait for politicians to argue over control while their children go hungry, while they sink deeper into poverty, while they worry that the next outbreak of violent conflict might send them fleeing for their lives. Recently, the People's Coalition for Civil Action launched an effort to mobilize all South Sudanese people, whether living within the country or abroad, and demand political change. In a declaration, they said they "have had enough of war, enough of corruption, enough of insecurity, enough of economic hardships, enough of public neglect and leadership failure." They admonished the administration of President Salva Kiir, which has completely failed to fulfill its most basic responsibilities to provide security and stability for its citizens.

Just days later, the South Sudanese National Security Service—NSS—arrested two of the leaders of the movement, Augustino Ting Mayai and a former State Governor, Kuel Aguer Kuel, for signing the declaration. The NSS shut down the Sudd Institute, a think tank involved in the creation of the People's Coalition for Civil Action, and issued arrest warrants for Rajab Mohandis and Abraham Awolich, two other signatories of the declaration, who have gone into hiding. This suppression of dissent is not new in South Sudan. Weak and paranoid new leaders often resort to projecting strength by arresting civil society leaders, journalists, and political rivals, and over the years, this has become President Kiir's trademark. This most recent transparent attempt to silence his own citizens for nothing more than demanding that he keep his promises and do his duty has not gone unnoticed by the rest of the world.

President Kiir may not know that Abraham Awolich was one of the now-famous Lost Boys, who as a child survived the civil war that killed most of

his family, endured malnutrition, and escaped attacks by rebel groups seeking child soldiers, only to find himself alone in a refugee camp. He eventually was resettled in the United States, arriving in Vermont in 2001, graduating from the University of Vermont, becoming an American citizen, and going on to get his master's degree. He was my constituent for many years, and I am very proud of the work he did as a member of the South Sudanese diasporic community who returned to his native country to help rebuild. President Kiir may not have known that Abraham Awolich was my constituent or that I will always consider him my constituent. So I call upon him now to immediately release Kuel Aguer Kuel and Augustino Ting Mayai, to cancel the arrest warrants for Rajab Mohandis and Abraham Awolich, and end the repression of civil society leaders, journalists, and dissidents.

I want to read into the RECORD a quote from Abraham Awolich's statement at the launch of their movement. What he said is instructive to every citizen of every democracy around the world. He said, "In the last 10 years the people of South Sudan have been dormant, they have not been challenging the status quo in the Republic of South Sudan and we cannot expect to have a democratic country without active citizenship."

President Kiir has an opportunity now, with a new Parliament seated and the seeds for an active and engaged citizenry sown, to show true leadership. He has no time to waste, or he will risk wasting his country's future and losing the support of the United States.

#### BELARUS

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, in early 2011, I had one of the more unusual experiences of my Senate career. I traveled back in time, from a free and democratic Lithuania to a closed and totalitarian Belarus. The trip was less than 3 hours, but it took me back to a dark past.

You see, Belarus is the last dictatorship in Europe. But like many dictatorships, it claims to be a democracy. In December 2010, it held what was billed as a Presidential election. The victor in that rigged contest was a heavy by the name of Alexander Lukashenko. His first act, after seizing the Presidency, was to jail all of those who were bold enough to run against him.

Months later, I drove from Vilnius to Minsk to meet with the family members of those jailed candidates, who had been arrested by Belarus security services still called the KGB. Mind you, the original KGB was dissolved more than three decades ago. That tells you all you need to know about how much the Belarusian Government has evolved since the fall of the Soviet Union. My meeting with those family members was sobering, and it is an encounter I will never forget.

Fortunately, over time, we were able to see the release of all these brave Belarusians, but not because Alexander Lukashenko had a sudden change of heart. He is still the same authoritarian thug he has always been. The world was reminded of that a year ago, when another sham election was held in Belarus. True to form, Lukashenko was reelected in that rigged contest. And once again, he began jailing those who had opposed him.

When one leading candidate, social media personality Sergei Tikhanovsky, was arbitrarily jailed, his wife Svetlana Tikhanovskaya stepped in to run in his place. She likely won the ensuing election, although we will never know for certain. The stolen electoral process that unfolded scared her into fleeing for safety in neighboring Lithuania.

Last month, Ms. Tikhanovskaya traveled to Washington, DC, to seek support for the Belarussian peoples' fight for freedom from tyranny. I was proud to meet with her, along with Senators SHAHEEN and SULLIVAN. And I was glad to see President Biden met with her as well. Svetlana Tikhanovskaya is a brave patriot carrying the torch of democracy for all the people of Belarus.

I thought of her, and other Belarussian patriots, as I watched the Olympics this week. In Tokyo, another brave Belarussian woman, sprinter Krystsina Tsimansouskaya, dared to publicly criticize Belarussian Olympic officials, a group from Lukashenko's ruling party. For her audacity, Lukashenko ordered the 24-year-old sprinter to return to Belarus immediately, right before she was scheduled to run in the women's 200-meter race on Monday.

If she had obliged, there is a very good chance she would be locked up in a Belarussian jail at this very moment, along with so many other political prisoners. But Krystsina Tsimansouskaya said no. At the Tokyo airport, before she could be forced onto a plane home, she sought protection from Japanese police. She also appealed to the International Olympic Committee for help. Her appeals worked. The Polish Government granted her a humanitarian visa. And Slovenia and the Czech Republic said she was welcome in their countries, too.

Ten years since my trip to Belarus, I am still moved by the courage of so many Belarusians like Ms. Tsimansouskaya, Ms. Tikhanovskaya, and the thousands upon thousands who have peacefully protested for a better future. These heroic leaders are still trapped in a dark past thanks to the same ruthless dictator who continues to cling onto power.

They are willing to risk so much for a chance at freedom. They are unafraid to stand up to despots and defend democracy. And they are an inspiration to a world that needs it. I want them to know we see them, and America stands

with them in their efforts to create a better and truly democratic Belarus.

#### HUNGARY

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, on a related note, Alexander Lukashenko may be the last dictator in Europe. But Hungarian Prime Minister Victor Orban is working hard to become the next dictator in Europe.

In his 15 years as Prime Minister, Orban has undermined Hungary's democratic institutions and the civil society groups that support them. He has dusted off the autocrat's handbook and used many of its familiar tricks, including using public funds to reward his cronies, spying on and jailing dissidents and independent journalists, and turning media organizations into his personal mouthpieces.

He spews ultranationalist bigotry dressed up as traditional values and rails against what he calls an immigrant invasion. Critics on both sides of the Atlantic cite him as a cautionary example of how democracies can die. Some European leaders have called for Hungary's expulsion from the E.U. because of Hungary's growing hostility to the bedrock values of democracy under Orban.

Despite this, every night this week, Tucker Carlson has broadcast his prime-time FOX show from Budapest, Hungary. He is not there to interview the brave supporters of Hungarian democracy who are trying to save their country from Orban and autocracy.

No, Tucker Carlson is in Hungary to praise Orban and hold up his strongman stunts as an example for America to follow. It is reported that he will also address a conference linked to Mr. Orban's anti-democratic nationalist movement.

Tucker Carlson has gone from spouting his dangerous anti-vax quackery and spreading the Big Lie at home, to travelling abroad to fawn over an autocrat and herald him as a leader worth emulating in this country.

Ronald Reagan would be horrified. We all should be.

#### THE GHOST ARMY CONGRESSIONAL GOLD MEDAL ACT

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I rise to recognize the contributions of the Ghost Army units of World War II and explain why I decided to join the Ghost Army Congressional Gold Medal Act as a cosponsor. The 23rd Headquarters Special Troops and the 3133rd Signal Service Company, together known as the Ghost Army, used deception tactics to fool the German Army about the location of American troops. These specialized units used inflatable tanks and sound effects to give the impression of a larger presence. While their role was theatrical, the units suffered casualties and operated close to the front lines. For over 50 years, these units and the contributions of the men who comprised them were kept a secret. I